

## Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1505

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 12425

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MASS, ET

SUBJECT: EMBASSY'S QUARTERLY REPORT

AF FOR EASUM

### 1. POLITICAL TURMOIL AND RAPID CHANGE

SINCE THE EMBASSY'S LAST QUARTERLY REPORT (DATED JULY 10), ETHIOPIA'S "CREEPING COUP" HAS GATHERED MOMENTUM. THE LARGELY FACELESS ARMED FORCES COORDINATING COMMITTEE (AFCC) REMOVED AND THEN IMPRISONED PRIME MINISTER ENDALKATCHEW MAKONNEN, REPLACED HIM WITH LIJ MICHAEL IMRU, AN ARISTOCRAT AND REFORMER, AND THEN IN SEPTEMBER CREATED THE ETHIOPIAN PROVISIONAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT (EPMG) UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF LT. GEN. AMAN MICHAEL ANDOM, ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF AND MINISTER OF DEFENSE. THE CREATION OF THE EPMG OCCURRED JUST AFTER THE CROWNING EVENT OF THE PERIOD, THE REMOVAL FROM POWER OF EMPEROR HAILE SELASSIE I AND HIS DETENTION, WITH A GROUP OF OVER 130 FORMER OFFICIALS, IN A LOCAL ARMY HEADQUARTERS. ALTHOUGH THE MILITARY STILL WORKS BEHIND THE CIVILIAN CABINET AND BUREAUCRACY, IT CALLS THE SHOTS. THE AFCC IS THE CORE OF THE EPMG, ITS SPOKESMEN ANNOUNCE GOVERNMENT POLICIES, AND ITS REPRESENTATIVES MEET WITH DISSIDENT ELEMENTS TO ENLIST PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THOSE POLICIES. THE EPMG HAS BEEN FACED WITH SPASMODIC STUDENT AND LABOR OPPOSITION. THIS OPPOSITION INTENSIFIED AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A CONTROVERSIAL PROGRAM TO CLOSE THE SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND UNI-

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VERSITY IN ORDER TO SEND THE STUDENTS INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE TO HELP

EXPLAIN AND EXECUTE THE EPMG'S PLANNED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REFORMS. AFTER THE ARRESTS IN LATE SEPTEMBER AND EARLY OCTOBER OF THREE TOP LABOR LEADERS AND SEVERAL SCORES OF STUDENTS, THE CIVILIAN OPPOSITION TO THE EPMG BECAME LESS VOCAL. THE AFCC ALSO MOVED FORCEFULLY AGAINST INTERNAL MILITARY DISSIDENTS. AN ATTEMPT TO ENFORCE MILITARY UNITY RESULTED IN A SHOOT-OUT ON OCTOBER 7 WHICH KILLED OR WOUNDED A DOZEN MILITARY PERSONNEL, MOST IF NOT ALL OF WHOM WERE OPPOSED TO THE MORE MODERATE CENTRISTS WHO CONTROL THE AFCC. FOR THE PRESENT, THESE MODERATES SEEM TO HAVE CONTAINED THE RADICAL LEFTIST AND RIGHT-WING MONARCHIST OPPOSITION TO THE EPMG. WHILE FISSURES WITHIN THE AFCC STILL EXIST AND THE CAUTIOUS CIVILIAN BUREAUCRACY LACKS DIRECTION AND FOCUS, A CURRENTLY MORE SELF-CONFIDENT EPMG APPEARS TO BE TRYING TO BEGIN FOCUSING ON FUTURE POLICIES, NOT JUST PAST ILLS. THE EPMG SEEMS TO BE GENUINELY CONCERNED ABOUT THE WELFARE OF THE ETHIOPIAN PEOPLE. THERE WILL BE MANY OCCASIONS IN THE COMING MONTHS TO JUDGE ITS CAPABILITIES. THE RECALL THIS MONTH OF ETHIOPIAN ENVOYS ABROAD, THE CONTINUING INVESTIGATIONS OF CORRUPTION UNDER THE ANCIEN REGIME, LONG-PROMISED BUT AS YET UNDEFINED LAND REFORMS, AND THE PUBLICATION OF A REVISED DRAFT CONSTITUTION, ALL PRESENT SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES TO THE EPMG AND WILL TEST WHETHER IT CAN BUILD A NEW ETHIOPIAN SOCIETY, NOT JUST DISMANTLE THE OLD ONE. SO FAR, HOWEVER, THE AFCC HAS ADAPTED TO THE SITUATION AND, WHEN NECESSARY, HAS ACTED DECISIVELY TO UNDERCUT ITS OPPOSITION.

## 2. MILITARY AID REQUEST

EPMG CHAIRMAN AMAN AND HIS HIGH LEVEL ENVOYS HAVE BEEN PRESSING THE USG FOR INCREASED MILITARY GRANTS AND FMS CREDITS. AMAN BELIEVES THAT GIVEN ITS ECONOMIC UNDERDEVELOPMENT, THE EFFECTS OF THE DROUGHT, AND THE PROBABLE ECONOMIC DISLOCATION WHICH MAY OCCUR DURING THE EPMG'S REORGANIZATION OF ETHIOPIAN ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL LIFE, ETHIOPIA CANNOT AFFORD TO PAY CASH FOR THE MODERN ARMS IT FEELS IT NEEDS. COMMENTS ON GENERAL AMAN'S REQUEST WERE SUBMITTED IN ADDIS 12337.

## 3. ELF INSURGENCY

AFTER 23 ERITREAN PARLIAMENTARIANS WALKED OUT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES IN AUGUST, THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT MOVED TO CONSIDER THE ERITREAN PROBLEM WITH NEW EARNESTNESS. THEN PRIME MINISTER MICHAEL IMRU, MINISTER OF DEFENSE AMAN AND MINISTER OF INTERIOR COL. CONFIDENTIAL

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BELACHEW MADE UNPRECEDENTED APPEARANCES BEFORE THE CHAMBER TO DISCUSS AND ANSWER QUESTIONS ON ERITREA. ON AUGUST 24, TO SHOW ITS GOOD WILL, THE GOVERNMENT APPOINTED AN ERITREAN AS THE NEW GOVERNOR GENERAL OF THE PROVINCE. TWO DAYS LATER, LT. GEN. AMAN, ANOTHER ERITREAN, TRAVELLED TO ASMARA TO MEET WITH LOCAL CIVILIAN AND MILITARY OFFICIALS TO EXPLAIN THE NEW ETHIOPIAN LEADERSHIP'S NATIONAL POLICIES AND PROMISE RESOLUTION OF THE ERITREAN PROBLEM. ALTHOUGH THE TWO MAIN FACTIONS OF THE ERITREAN LIBERATION FRONT

(ELF) PUBLICLY REJECTED ANY OFFER OF RECONCILIATION FROM THE ADDIS GOVERNMENT, A FLURRY OF VISITS BY ETHIOPIAN AND SUDANESE OFFICIALS TO KHARTOUM AND ADDIS GAVE RISE TO REPORTS THAT EXPLORATORY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE ELF WERE UNDER WAY. IN AN EFFORT TO FORGE ELF UNITY, REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH ELF FACTIONS MET OUTSIDE ASMARA ON OCTOBER 5-6 AND REPORTEDLY DREW A CROWD OF 20-30,000 ERITREANS. TERRORIST INCIDENTS IN ASMARA AROUSED STRONG REACTIONS IN THE 2ND DIVISION WHICH MIGHT HAVE RESULTED IN MILITARY ACTION AGAINST THOSE ATTENDING THE MEETING. THIS THREAT CAUSED GENERAL AMAN, NOW EPMG CHAIRMAN, TO MAKE A FLYING VISIT TO ASMARA ON OCTOBER 6. HE CHASTIZED THE PEOPLE OF ERITREA FOR THEIR CONTINUING (SUBVERSIVE) ACTIVITIES AND BANNED "UNAUTHORIZED MEETINGS." HE ALSO PRIVATELY CAUTIONED THE 2ND DIVISION TO REFRAIN FROM RISKING PROVOCATIONS AND REPLACED ITS COMMANDER. LATEST REPORTS FROM THE PROVINCE INDICATE THAT THE PLF AND ELF HAVE AGAIN HAD A BLOODY ARMED CLASH AND RAISE STRONG DOUBTS AS TO THE SUCCESS OF ANY PLF-ELF RECONCILIATION. IN SPITE OF GENERAL AMAN'S PUBLIC EFFORTS TO END THE ERITREAN PROBLEM, THE EPMG HAS SHOWN LITTLE WILLINGNESS TO DEAL DECISIVELY WITH IT BY TAKING SUCH NECESSARY POLITICAL MEASURES AS GRANTING LOCAL AUTONOMY, PROVIDING ECONOMIC AID TO ERITREA AND INCREASING HEALTH AND EDUCATION PROGRAMS THERE. THUS, THE ERITREAN ISSUE CONTINUES TO BE ONE OF ETHIOPIA'S PRESSING, DIVISIVE AND MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS.

#### 4. ETHIOPIAN DROUGHT SITUATION

THE DROUGHT RELIEF COMMISSION AND OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERNMENT HAVE REQUESTED THAT DONOR GOVERNMENTS PROVIDE 278,000 MT OF GRAIN FOR DISASTER RELIEF PURPOSES IN CY 1975. THEY ARE ALSO REQUESTING AN ADDITIONAL 60,000 MT TO BE USED AS AN EMERGENCY STOCKPILE. THESE AMOUNTS ARE POSITED ON THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTENTION THAT THE COUNTRY IS SUFFERING FROM A MORE EXTREME DROUGHT/FAMINE SITUATION THAN THAT WHICH PREVAILED AT THE HEIGHT OF THE WOLLO CRISIS OF 1973 WHEN 100,000 PEOPLE ARE BELIEVED TO HAVE DIED IN

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THAT PROVINCE ALONE. DONOR ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THIS MISSION, MISSIONARY GROUPS AND OTHERS CONCERNED WITH PROVIDING RELIEF ASSISTANCE ARE SKEPTICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT'S ASSERTIONS, WHICH ARE AT SHARP VARIANCE WITH THOSE OF OTHER OBSERVERS. THE GENERAL VIEW OF SUCH OBSERVERS IS THAT DESPITE POCKETS OF DISTRESS THE CRISIS PERIOD IS SUBSIDING, THE RAINS HAVE BEEN NORMAL OR ABOVE NORMAL THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE COUNTRY, AND THAT AT LEAST AVERAGE HARVEST YIELDS MAY BE EXPECTED. USAID IS ENGAGED IN AN EFFORT TO ASSESS THE SITUATION BY SENDING STAFF MEMBERS TO VARIOUS SECTIONS OF THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING 44 LOCATIONS WHICH THE GOVERNMENT HAS INDICATED ARE DISTRESSED.

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